

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

What if God were Here Right Now? He Is!

Last week, I encouraged you to spend some QUIET time with the Lord. I hope that you were able to find some time every day to re-connect with God. I realize that this isn't always easy. In fact, some may say, "I've tried this and all I hear from God is silence." OK, well, this week, let's try a more guided meditation. For this, we turn again to St. Ignatius. Ignatius encourages us to examine our conscience (or really, consciousness) to see where God has been active in our daily life.

The examen takes place in 5 steps:

Become aware of God's presence. God is always present we just need to recognize it; however, here we are speaking of a twofold awareness. First, we should try to be aware of God's presence with us during this moment of prayer. In other words, enter into the silence, as we spoke about last week. Next, we should become aware that God was present with us throughout the day. This leads to our next step.

Review the day with gratitude. St. Paul says, "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." [1 Thess 5:18] As we are becoming aware of God's presence with us through the events of our day, we give thanks to God. First of all, we give thanks that He is living up to the promise He made before He ascended into Heaven: "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." [Matt 28:20] Also, we give thanks to God for the events of our lives. Although it is much easier for us to give thanks to God for all the positive moments, we should also give thanks for the challenges that we had during the day. For example, "Thank you, Lord, for the traffic jam on 95, it gave me a few more minutes to pray the rosary (or call that friend I've been meaning to call for weeks)."

Pay attention to your emotions. God speaks to us most clearly through our thoughts and feelings. As we review the events of our day, how did you see God working through these events and what is God trying to tell you? Is He trying to tell you to be a bit more patient? Did He bring you some consolation from a chance meeting with new client or an old friend? Did you find a small moment of peace during your morning walk? Is God trying to help you trust Him a bit more through the illness you're enduring?

Choose one feature from your day and pray from it. This is an extension of Step 3. You may choose one moment where you responded well to God's presence or you may choose a moment where you could have responded better. You may also see a common thread in your day that you are inspired to bring to prayer.

Look toward tomorrow. Pray that God will bless your tomorrow even more than today, and that the moments and lessons of this day may bring fruit in the next.

Since, in previous weeks, you have found a good time for you to spend some quiet, quality time with God, I now encourage you to try this type of prayer during that time. You needn't wait until the end of the day to make this prayer. You may use this method whenever you have time for prayer. Sometimes a prayerful lunch hour is a great way to see how the day's begun and look toward the afternoon and evening.

Next week, we'll begin our discussion of how God reaches out to us through the Sacraments.

